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CONTACT:
Tom Lenard
Senate Democratic Caucus
(517) 373-8421
Maleigh Jackson
Sen. Garcia's Office
(517) 373-2420

LAWMAKERS JOIN TOGETHER TO IMPROVE STATEWIDE FIRE SAFETY

Bills Make Michigan Safer by Strengthening Homeland Security and Emergency Management

LANSING- Democratic and Republican lawmakers today announced the passage of a legislative package that will streamline and enhance fire protection services and increase homeland security.

"These initiatives will help ensure that we are prepared for emergencies in the future," said Sen. Mike Prusi (D-Ishpeming). "They will give firefighters, fire chiefs, and other members of the fire service the tools they need to continue protecting citizens across Michigan, by strengthening the state's emergency management and homeland security systems."

The legislation passed today will establish a new Bureau of Fire Services. The new bureau, to be housed within the Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG), will consolidate fire fighting resources and promote more effective and efficient fire fighting techniques.

"This is the single most important legislation regarding fire services in recent history," said Sen. Valde Garcia (R-Howell). "I'm glad this worthwhile package could receive the bi-partisan support it deserves."

The bipartisan legislation was introduced in March. It follows an executive directive issued last November by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm ordering that planning begin immediately on a new agency that would be responsible for the fire service related aspects of the state's homeland security and emergency response efforts.

The 25 bill package will establish a Bureau of Fire Services headed by the State Fire Marshall. In addition, the legislative package will also do the following:

- Improve communication and coordination among our state's fire fighting services.
- Recognize the act creating the Arson Strike Force Unit.
- Transfer the Fire Fighting Training Council to the Bureau of Fire Services.
- Require that local units of government apply to the Bureau of Fire Services for permits to process fireworks.
- Provide tort damage immunity to firefighting instructors.

"As first responders, we need every tool and advantage we can get to help save lives and property," said Paul Hufnagel of the Michigan Fire Service Coalition. "This legislation is a major improvement that will help us do our jobs well."

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